UNITED
NATIONS

E

Economic and Social
Council

Distr.
LIMITED

E/CN.4/1997/L.24
27 March 1997

ENGLISH
Original: FRENCH

COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS
Fifty-third session
Agenda item 5

QUESTION OF THE REALIZATION IN ALL COUNTRIES OF THE ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS CONTAINED IN THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND IN THE INTERNATIONAL COVENANT ON ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS, AND STUDY OF SPECIAL PROBLEMS WHICH THE DEVELOPING COUNTRIES FACE IN THEIR EFFORTS TO ACHIEVE THESE HUMAN RIGHTS

Afghanistan*, Algeria, Angola, Argentina, Austria, Bangladesh, Belgium*, Benin, Cameroon*, Chile, Colombia, Congo*, Costa Rica*, Côte d'Ivoire*, Cuba, Cyprus*, Denmark, Dominican Republic*, Egypt, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece*, Guatemala*, Haiti*, Ireland, Italy, Madagascar, Mozambique, Nepal, Nicaragua, Papua New Guinea*, Peru*, Poland*, Portugal*, Russian Federation, Rwanda*, San Marino*, Slovakia*, South Africa, Spain, Switzerland*, Uganda and Venezuela*: draft resolution

1997/... Human rights and extreme poverty

The Commission on Human Rights,

Recalling that, in accordance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenants on Human Rights recognize that the ideal of free human beings enjoying freedom from fear and want can be achieved only if conditions are created whereby everyone may enjoy his economic, social and cultural rights, as well as his civil and political rights,

---

* In accordance with rule 69, paragraph 3, of the rules of procedure of the functional commissions of the Economic and Social Council.

Recalling also that the eradication of widespread poverty, including its most persistent forms, and the full enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights and civil and political rights remain interrelated goals,

Deeply concerned by the fact that extreme poverty continues to spread throughout the countries of the world, regardless of their economic, social or cultural situation, and gravely affects the most vulnerable and disadvantaged individuals, families and groups, who are thus hindered in the exercise of their human rights and their fundamental freedoms,

Noting the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which recognizes that there are in all countries in the world children living in especially difficult conditions and that special attention should be paid to such children,

Welcoming the relevant provisions of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action (A/CONF.157/23) adopted by the World Conference on Human Rights,

Recalling its resolution 1990/15 of 23 February 1990, in which it requested the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities to carry out a specific study of extreme poverty and social exclusion and its other relevant resolutions, in particular resolution 1996/10 of 11 April 1996, as well as Sub-Commission resolution 1996/23 of 29 August 1996,

Recalling also General Assembly resolutions 50/107 of 20 December 1995 and 51/97 of 12 December 1996,

Stressing that, in the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and the Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development, Governments committed themselves to eradicating poverty throughout the world through national action and international cooperation, taking account of the fact that this is an ethical, social, political and economic imperative of humankind,

Welcoming the activities undertaken for the International Year for the Eradication of Poverty,

Noting that the majority of persons living in poverty are women, children or the elderly and that women bear a disproportionate burden,

Noting also with interest the microcredit Summit held in Washington (D.C.) in February 1997, which focused on the importance of encouraging national initiatives for social development including, inter alia, access

to credit for people living in poverty, particularly women, through employment and income-generation to address the feminization of poverty,

Having examined the final report on human rights and extreme poverty (E/CN.4/Sub.2/1996/13) presented at the forty-eighth session of the Sub-Commission by the Special Rapporteur, Mr. Leandro Despouy,

1. Reaffirms that:

(a) extreme poverty and exclusion from society constitute a violation of human dignity and that urgent national and international action is therefore required to eliminate them;

(b) in accordance with the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action (A/CONF.157/23), it is essential for States to foster participation by the poorest people in the decision-making process in their communities, in the promotion of human rights and in efforts to combat extreme poverty;

2. Recalls that:

(a) to ensure the protection of the rights of all individuals, non-discrimination towards the poorest and the full exercise of all human rights and fundamental freedoms, a better understanding is needed of what is endured by people living in poverty, including women and children, and thought must be given to the subject, drawing on the experience and ideas of the poorest themselves and of those committed to working alongside them;

(b) in the Copenhagen Declaration, Governments also undertook to endeavour to ensure that all men and women, especially those living in poverty, may exercise the rights, utilize the resources and share the responsibilities that will enable them to lead satisfying lives and to contribute to the well-being of their families, their communities and humankind as well as the provisions of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action adopted by the fourth World Conference on Women;

3. Expresses its satisfaction to the Special Rapporteur for his final report on human rights and extreme poverty, prepared on the basis of consultations with persons living in extreme poverty and the persons and NGOs engaged in the field among very poor persons, families and population groups throughout the world;

4. Calls upon:

(a) the General assembly, specialized agencies, United Nations bodies and intergovernmental organizations to consider the contradiction between the

existence of situations of extreme poverty and exclusion from society, which must be overcome, and the duty to guarantee full enjoyment of human rights;

(b) States, the organs of the United Nations and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, in conformity with the Vienna and Copenhagen Declarations and Programmes of Action, to continue to take into account, in the activities to be undertaken within the framework of the United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty, the links between extreme poverty and human rights, as well as the efforts of the poorest themselves to combat poverty and the importance of associating them with all stages of these activities;

5. Invites the treaty bodies monitoring the application of human rights instruments, notably the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Human Rights Committee, the Committee on the Rights of the Child and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, to take into account, when considering the reports of States parties, the question of extreme poverty and human rights;

6. Requests the Secretary-General:

(a) to take the necessary measures to ensure that the final report of the Special Rapporteur on human rights and extreme poverty is published as a United Nations publication in all the official languages and that it receives the widest possible distribution, particularly within the framework of activities of the United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty and the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights;

(b) to place the report at the disposal of non-governmental organizations which desire to reproduce it in languages accessible to the greatest number of persons living in extreme poverty;

(c) to convey the final report of the Special Rapporteur to the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council, the Commission for Social Development, the Commission on Sustainable Development, the Trade and Development Board of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, the Executive Boards of the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Children's Fund and the Executive Committee of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees for consideration at their next sessions, as well as to any other body to which the Secretary-General considers it should be communicated;

7. Requests the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to:

(a) give high priority to the question of human rights and extreme poverty within United Nations human rights bodies;

(b) ensure, within the framework of his role as coordinator of activities related to the promotion and defence of human rights within the United Nations system as a whole, better cooperation between institutions or bodies involved in the development of policies and strategies for protecting human rights and combating poverty, in association with the poorest and persons working with them;

(c) invite Governments, specialized agencies and intergovernmental organizations to take account of the contradictions between the existence of situations of extreme poverty and exclusion from society, which must be overcome, and the duty to guarantee full enjoyment of human rights;

(d) collaborate closely with all the organizations concerned, particularly with the NGOs as well as those working alongside the poorest;

(e) regularly inform the General Assembly of the evolution of the question of human rights and extreme poverty, notably the steps taken to coordinate activities in this field, consultations undertaken with Governments and governmental and non-governmental organizations, obstacles encountered and progress achieved in promoting the full enjoyment of human rights among persons living in extreme poverty, as well as the most innovative activities implemented to this end;

(f) submit specific information on this question at events such as the evaluation of the World Conference on Human Rights planned for 1998, the special session of the General Assembly devoted to conclusions of the World Summit on Social Development, scheduled for 2000, and the evaluation, at the half-way point in 2002 and the end-point in 2007, of the first United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty;

(g) continue his discussions with the World Bank and report on the creation of microcredit programmes at the fifty-fourth session of the Commission;

8. Recommends the following draft decision to the Economic and Social Council for adoption:

The Economic and Social Council, taking note of Commission on Human Rights resolution 1997/... of ... March/April 1997, and Sub-Commission on

Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities resolution 1996/23, of 29 August 1996, entitled "Human rights and extreme poverty", approves the requests made to the Secretary-General:

(a) to publish the final report on human rights and extreme poverty in all the United Nations working languages;

(b) to convey the Special Rapporteur's final report to the General Assembly, to the Commission for Social Development, to the Commission on Sustainable Development, to the Trade and Development Board of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, to the Executive Boards of the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Children's Fund and to the Executive Committee of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees for consideration at their next sessions, as well as to any other body to which the Secretary-General considers it should be communicated;

9. Decides to consider this question at its fifty-fourth session under the same agenda item.